

lies not in the elaborate and largely imaginative details, but in the great, strong, quickening general thoughts and the impression and influence which they create as a whole?

We must judge all literary forms by the literary habits and tastes of the age and people to which they belong. And there was a class of religious literature widely current and highly prized both in the later Jewish and in the early Christian ages to which this book belongs, however superior to all other books of the class, and in relation to which it must be judged and interpreted.

*Apocalyptic literature* is the form which prophecy assumed in later and troublous times, in times of foreign oppression and persecution. The transition is seen within the Old Testament, where we pass from prophecy, closing with Malachi, to apocalypse in the Book of Daniel, at the time of the oppression of Syria and the heroic struggle of the Maccabees. This special form of literature arose in the midst of foreign oppression, when it was imperatively necessary, by all available methods, to confirm the people in the faith of ethical monotheism, to encourage them in patient endurance under persecution, and to fan the expiring flame of their hope in the coming of the Messiah and the triumph of the kingdom of God. The author of the Book of Daniel was granted visions from God which inspired his own hope and which he then freely and plastically elaborated for the benefit of his people. In all this literature, both within the Bible and without it, brilliant pictures are painted with much of the luxuriance of Oriental imagination. Pictures of the deliverance, power, wealth, felicity to be shortly ushered in for the faithful people of God at the advent of the Messiah. One prom-